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by DAD/RR on 15  
October 1963.~~SECRET~~  
~~GROUP 1~~The Significance of Four Million Tons of US Wheat for  
Food Consumption in the USSR

Four million tons of wheat is equal to an average of about 140 calories per capita per day in the Soviet Union. This is about 5 percent of the estimated total caloric value of the average Soviet diet. It is equal to some 12 percent of domestic consumption of wheat for food, which has run about thirty-four million tons annually. Any shortages of bread might have disturbing political consequences since bread is such an important element in the diet of the Russian people. The leadership is undoubtedly aware that grain shortages could lead to civil disturbances in the Soviet Union more widespread than those in 1962. It is expected that the imported grain will be especially significant in maintaining urban consumption levels.

The very poor wheat crop of 1963, estimated at about 44 million tons, left the Soviets some 11-13 million tons short of normal production. Unusual conditions in recent years may have caused the Soviets to draw down their wheat reserves. Although we do not have any direct information on the extent to which these reserves are depleted, the urgency of Soviet purchases suggest that they are presently very low.

To date, the USSR has purchased some 8-9 million tons of wheat and flour from Free World countries. If they purchase four million tons from the U.S., they will probably have enough wheat to meet current basic domestic food requirements and export commitments, and may replenish their reserves to some extent. The Soviets have been net exporters of 4-6 million tons of wheat per year for the past four years, largely to the European Satellites. We believe that unless they obtain wheat in the U.S. the Soviets may find it necessary to reduce wheat exports to the European Satellites, Brazil, India, and Egypt in order to prevent a food shortage in the USSR.

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